

# Steps in the Child Welfare System

When children go into placement and the plan is for the children to go home with their family (Reunification)

What  
Has  
Already  
Happened

## Step 1 - Report to CPS



Somebody is worried about children and calls CPS or police. CPS asks questions and then looks over all the information and may decide to go see the family.

## Step 2 - Investigation/Assessment & First Plans



CPS meets with family members, including children and parents, and seeks to understand what's going on for the family and if the children are safe.

## Step 3 - Placement



If children aren't safe at home and the family isn't able to make a plan for their safety, the children are placed temporarily.

### Court Hearings



- Emergency Removal Hearing
- Adjudication Hearing – determine child is dependent, based on concerns about abuse, neglect and safety
- Disposition Hearing – to determine a plan of action, including visitation plan (*may occur later*)

Where Is  
Your  
Family  
Now and  
What Is  
Coming  
Up for  
Your  
Family?

## Step 4 - More Assessment & Planning



- What does the family need?
- How can each person in family help the children?
- What services and other help can be put into place for family members?

## Step 5 - A Written Plan



- What problems need to be worked on?
- What strengths does each family member have that can help him or her help the children?
- What services and other help are needed?
- What will each family member do and be responsible for?
- What will caseworkers do and be responsible for?
- Who are the service providers, and what will they do and be responsible for?
- What are the timelines for everyone?
- What's the permanency goal? (*example: child will go home to one of his parents or other relative*)
- What are the goals for the parents? (*example: parents will be sober*)
- What are the steps to the goals? (*example: parent will attend AA*)
- How will it be clear that there is progress and success? (*measures*)

### Court Hearings



- Disposition Hearing might occur at this point

## Step 6 - Work on the Plan



- Family works on the plan: participates in services and tries to make changes that will be good for them and the children
- Service providers and others help the family as is written in the plan
- Caseworker supports the family, talks with them about how they are doing, makes sure services are available, reassesses safety and how family is doing, writes progress reports
- Foster family or relative takes care of the child
- Family visits with child
- Changes made to plan if needed

### Court Hearings



- Review Hearing (*6 months after child removed from home*) – to determine if progress is being made and if permanency plan should stay the same or change

### Who Could Be Involved?

- Family, their friends and helpers
- Child welfare/child protection
- Court (*judge, magistrate, GAL, CASA, attorneys*)
- Foster Parents (*relative care providers or residential care providers*)
- Service Providers (*therapists, counselors, clergy*)
- Police
- Other concerned persons (*community members*)

## Step 7 - Permanency for Children



- Family, caseworker, and service providers review progress
- Decision about what to recommend to court about permanency
- Ongoing services to family as needed

### Court Hearings



Permanency Hearing (*at 12 months*) – should child be returned to a parent or live somewhere else? If somewhere else, the court will look at adoption or guardianship with a relative. If the court decides the children should be adopted, this is likely to lead to a hearing called a Terminating Parental Rights (TPR) hearing to terminate parents' rights to their children.

## Step 8 - Closure & Follow Up



- Family, caseworker and maybe team meet to decide what after-care services and other help are needed